

OVERVIEW

On Thursday, November 9, 2000, Clark County hosted part II of “CitizenSpeak, a Countywide Assembly on the Comprehensive Management Plan Review” at the Clark County Fairgrounds. The event was a public forum to discuss 14 key decisions related to the review of the county’s comprehensive plan. Approximately 75 people signed in at the registration tables.

Structure

The information fair during the first hour of the meeting allowed participants to review displays that provided background information and a summary of prior public involvement efforts. The focus of the meeting was to review and solicit input on the 14 key decisions related to five major policy areas. These areas are:

- How much growth?
- Where to grow?
- How to grow/Housing?
- How to grow/Jobs?
- How do we make Clark County a desirable place to live?

Following the information fair the meeting was opened with an address from Clark County Commissioner Craig Pridemore. Facilitator Jeanne Lawson summarized the public involvement process and the range of citizen input gathered during preceding meetings and gatherings.

After Pat Lee, Clark County Long Range Planning Manager, introduced the 14 key decisions, the group identified two decisions to be evaluated later in the evening in small groups. The key decisions chosen by the participants to receive closer review were: **Should we change the thresholds for expanding the urban growth boundaries (UGBs)?** and **How do we provide people with opportunities for input on plans for their neighborhoods?**

Participants were then presented with options for each of the 14 key decisions. They used color-coded cards to evaluate each option. They also used cards to express whether they felt individual key decisions were paired with a complete range of options. Each participant tracked their responses on worksheets, which also provided space for comments and additional options for each key decision. A compilation of the worksheet responses is located in the appendix of this document.

The group then closely reviewed the 2 key decisions selected at the beginning of the event. In their small groups, participants generated a list of additional options for each of the decisions. They selected two options to present to the entire group. The group then visually evaluated these options using the color-coded cards. Finally, participants shared general feedback on the key decisions and the public process for reviewing the comprehensive plan. Commissioner Pridemore closed the meeting.

Selected Key Decisions

*Should we change the thresholds for expanding the urban growth boundaries (UGBs)?
Currently boundaries are moved only if development has occurred on 75 percent of buildable residential or commercial land, or 50 percent of industrial land.*

Options Developed by Small Groups

The comments following each option were derived from a visual assessment of the mix of color cards raised after each option was introduced to the entire group. See the appendix for a complete list of small group flip chart notes.

- Maintain 75% threshold to assure land use efficiency. **(opinions were mixed)**
- Develop thresholds that can provide for the amount of services needed. **(majority liked this option)**
- Each urban area should develop its own threshold. **(majority liked this option)**
- Develop dispersed work/industrial areas that are placed near housing in order to minimize traffic. **(most people liked or felt neutral about this option)**
- Infill and upzone before moving boundaries; these strategies minimize the use of capital facilities. **(majority didn't like this option)**
- Don't limit thresholds to straight percentage ratios. **(most people liked or felt neutral about this option)**
- Continue to expand UGBs as needed to accommodate for five-year growth forecasts. **(majority didn't like this option)**
- Designate industrial lands now so that landowners have better planning information when they develop plans for future use. **(majority didn't like this option)**
- The market should drive residential housing ratios; ratios should be reviewed each year in order to inform future planning options. **(majority didn't like this option)**

Additional Options

- Review the Vacant Buildable Land Inventory annually and adjust use of land before expanding the UGB.
- Increase thresholds to 75%/50%.
- Review thresholds more frequently.
- Modify thresholds by area (e.g. increase density along 1-5).
- Increase thresholds to 80%, this will help preserve environmental resources and quality of life.
- Why are schools being built on the edge of UGBs when these areas are zoned for housing?
- The size and zoning (i.e. rural, urban, or suburban) should be taken into consideration in establishing growth boundaries.
- Develop "multi-mini" urban centers where areas have small urban centers, with light industrial centers that are about 50 acres. There would 75% single-family 25% multi-family housing ratios in the areas between mini-urban centers.
- Move boundaries before changing the designation of existing UGBs.
- There should be a minimum density for each city or UGB.

How do we provide people with opportunities for input in plans for their neighborhoods?

The group didn't rate the following options. Generally, participants agreed that neighborhood involvement in planning issues is important. Small group discussions focused on improving outreach tactics and revising land use processes in order to improve neighborhood decision-making.

- Greater notification of development plans (increase direct mailings and newspaper notification timeframes).
- Increase current outreach activities.
- Create a staff position to service neighborhood associations.
- Proactive approach would include distributing flyers to each house within a ½ mile radius.
- Provide neighborhood associations with more input.
- Notify residents in areas where there are no neighborhood association (e.g. rural areas).
- Neighborhood associations should be a conduit between residents and the county.
- When zoning or development changes happen the community (not just people who live very close to the area) should be involved in a pre-application process.
- Increase use of web-page; county should provide technical assistance and maintenance for neighborhood association web-sites.
- Create sub-area plans that are smaller than neighborhood association boundaries.
- Developers should be required to bring plans to the community.
- Larger newsletter and increase the number of mailings.
- Allow each community to personalize plans based on current trends, except when large improvements are needed (e.g. if an area is blighted future plans should improve livability).
- Work with citizens to develop plans that are pedestrian friendly and provide adequate retail options in areas where growth is expected.
- Require consultation with neighborhoods about design of developments before they are permitted; allow neighborhood associations to design the landscaping themes in their community.
- Revamp the current system for citizen input; public hearings are frustrating because citizens can only review the regulations as they relate to the proposed plan.
- Develop a public involvement system that adequately involves rural areas.
- Create predevelopment plans; the current system weakens neighborhood decision making because developer create plans before residents populate areas.
- Develop site-specific outreach efforts; supermarkets are a good place to reach residents.

Major Policy Questions Worksheet Summary

A summary of worksheet responses for each key decision is below. In general there was very little group consensus; support for options was often mixed. Several options had a great number of “neutral/unsure” ratings. 54 individual worksheets were collected and summarized. See the appendix for the numeric results of the tallies and a complete list of comments for each key decision.

HOW MUCH GROWTH?

1. **What population forecast supplied by the state’s Office of Financial Management will be used?**
 - a) **Low – 419,188**
 - b) **Medium – 497,199**
 - c) **High – 587,622**

The low population forecast option was not widely supported. Support for a medium forecast was mixed; the high forecast option received the most positive support. The group thought this decision had a good range of options.

WHERE TO GROW?

2. **Should we change the thresholds for expanding the urban growth boundaries?**
 - a) **Keep existing thresholds—75% of buildable residential/commercial or 50% of buildable industrial must already be developed.**
 - b) **Rely on a 20-year population forecast rather than setting buildable lands thresholds.**

Support for keeping the existing thresholds, option (a), was mixed. There was moderately more support than not for option (b), relying on a 20-year population forecast. However, the small groups discussed this decision in greater depth toward the end of evening. There wasn’t consensus about whether this decision had a good range of options.

WHERE TO GROW?

3. How should projected population be allocated to each jurisdiction?

- a) **Keep method used to prepare current plan--allocate to maintain the percentage of county population living within each individual urban growth area.**
- b) **Allocate based on growth rates of individual urban growth areas over the last ten years.**
- c) **Allocate based on amount of buildable residential lands in each urban growth area with a ceiling.**
- d) **Allocate based on amount of buildable residential lands in each urban growth area without a ceiling.**

Option (a) received very little support; a considerable number of participants indicated that they did not like this option. The remaining two options received mixed evaluations, though option (c), had more support than option (d). There wasn't consensus about whether this decision had a good range of options.

WHERE TO GROW?

4. Should the plan continue to expect that 81% of new residential growth should occur in urban areas?

- a) **Yes**
- b) **No. Plan for more growth in urban areas.**
- c) **No. Plan for more growth in rural areas.**
- d) **Limit rural development to the population accommodated by 2000 zoning.**

Support varied greatly for options (a), (b), and (c). The final option, which includes limiting rural development, was supported slightly more than opposed. The group thought this decision had a good range of options.

Where to Grow?

5. **Should we manage how urban reserves are developed to ensure they can transition to urban areas in the future? Urban reserves are the areas just outside the urban growth boundary where any future boundary expansion will first occur**
- a) **Continue existing approach with 10-acre minimum lot size.**
 - b) **Keep urban reserves but do more detailed planning for them.**
 - c) **Rezone the urban reserve areas and move them into urban area but do not develop them until adequate services are available.**

There was a lack of support for option (a), keeping the existing approach. The majority of responses supported option (b), to keep urban reserves and do more detailed planning. Support for option (c) was mixed. The group thought this decision had a good range of options.

HOW TO GROW/HOUSING?

6. **Should we continue to set targets at 60% single-family and 40% multi-family for new housing construction in all urban areas?**
- a) **Keep existing policy.**
 - b) **Set separate targets based on a community's size and its current land uses.**
 - c) **Establish new policy that allows no more than 75% of new housing to be single-family detached.**
 - d) **Establish new policy that requires 30% of new housing to be attached housing.**
 - e) **Replace existing policy with housing affordability policies.**

The majority of respondents did not support keeping the existing policy. There was significant support for option (b), establishing a new policy that allows no more than 75% of new housing to be for single-family use. There was support for replacing the existing policy with affordable housing efforts. The group thought this decision had a good range of options.

HOW TO GROW/HOUSING?

- 7. Should we continue to plan for an average of 6 units per acre for new single-family detached housing and 16 units per acre for attached housing?**
- a) Keep existing goals.**
 - b) Set goals for an overall countywide density for all housing types.**
 - c) Set different goals for each urban area to achieve an overall countywide density.**
 - d) Establish a tiered system designating average densities for cities and the unincorporated areas of UGAs based on their size. Major population centers would have higher density targets than small centers.**
 - e) Increase housing density goals.**
 - f) Decrease housing density goals.**

Although many people chose a neutral response for option (a), the majority supported keeping the existing goal. There was little support for option (b). Options (c) and (d), which would create more flexibility in terms of setting density goals, received a lot of support. In general, people liked the idea of increasing housing density goals. Decreasing housing density goals received mixed support. The group thought this decision had a good range of options.

HOW TO GROW/HOUSING?

- 8. How do we plan for new rural housing?**
- a) Keep existing approach of allowing zoning and the market to drive rural growth.**
 - b) Allow more home sites in rural centers.**
 - c) Allow market-driven rezoning of rural areas.**
 - d) Change zoning to allow smaller minimum lot sizes.**

Option (b), allow more home sites in rural centers, received a great deal of support. There was slightly more support than not for allowing the market to drive rezoning in rural areas. The remaining options received mixed reviews. The group thought this decision had a good range of options.

HOW TO GROW/JOB?

9. How should we plan for job growth?

- a) **Keep method used to prepare 1994 plan—allocate one job for every two residents by urban growth area.**
- b) **Keep current industrial/commercial zoning and actively promote development of these areas.**
- c) **Increase the amount of industrial/commercial lands designated in the comprehensive plan.**

Several people liked option (a), keep the method used to prepare for job growth used for the 1994 plan. There was also wide support for actively promoting development in existing industrially/commercially-zoned areas. For the most part, the group thought this decision had a good range of options. However several people were unsure about the range of options.

HOW TO GROW/JOB?

10. Where should job growth be directed?

- a) **Direct growth to lands currently designated as industrial/commercial. Invest in infrastructure to bring them up to prime buildable status.**
- b) **Increase amount of land in urban growth areas designated as industrial/commercial, allowing more potential growth in UGAs rather than in rural areas.**
- c) **Increase amount of designated industrial/commercial land in both UGAs and rural areas, potentially dispersing job growth.**

Most responses supported option (a), which would increase infrastructure investments in current industrial/commercial lands. More people disliked than liked option (c), which would increase the amount of industrial/commercial land in both UGAs and rural areas. The group thought this decision had a good range of options.

HOW DO WE MAKE CLARK COUNTY A DESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE?

- 11. What levels of service should be planned for capital facilities such as roads, parks, water, sewer, schools, etc.?**
- a) Plan for high levels of service.**
 - b) Plan for lower, more affordable levels of service.**

Both options received widespread support. The group didn't reach consensus about whether this decision had a good range of options.

HOW DO WE MAKE CLARK COUNTY A DESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE?

- 12. How do we plan in a way that addresses state and federal environmental laws?**
- a) Make environmental protection a county priority.**
 - b) Do the minimum to meet state and federal standards.**

There was significant support for making environmental protection a county priority. However, there was nearly equal support for doing the minimum required to meet state and federal environmental standards. The group thought this decision had a good range of options.

HOW DO WE MAKE CLARK COUNTY A DESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE?

- 13. How do we provide people with opportunities for input on plans for their neighborhoods?**
- a) Develop proactive processes for neighborhood community-based planning.**
 - b) Keep current processes in which neighborhoods and community organizations become involved at their own initiative.**

Developing proactive processes for neighborhood involvement received a great deal of support, but about 20 people were unsure of or disliked this option. Also, about twice as many people indicated that they disliked the current system than people who did like it. The group thought this decision had a good range of options. Later in the evening, small groups discussed this decision in greater detail.

HOW DO WE MAKE CLARK COUNTY A DESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE?

- 14. What role should design standards play in addressing such things as the exterior appearance of structures, landscaping, etc.?**
- a) Develop countywide design standards to increase the quality and aesthetics of construction.**
 - b) Do not pursue countywide design standards.**
 - c) Provide neighborhoods with the opportunity to help develop design standards that apply specifically to their areas.**

There was a great deal of support for developing countywide quality and design standards. The vast majority of participants liked the idea of providing neighborhoods with the opportunity to help develop design standards that apply specifically to their areas. The group thought this decision had a good range of options.

Closing Comments

Participants were generally enthusiastic about the meeting's outcomes and expressed interest in following the process further. Below is a list of closing comments:

- County planners should research planning efforts in other regions (there was concern about the degree to which plans are influenced by Portland's land use policies).
- The shift away from developing industrial centers has increased traffic problems.
- Create small urban centers throughout the county.
- Provide rural areas with better capital facilities and basic services.
- Focus on long-range planning that looks ahead more than 20 years.
- Youth should be included in this planning process because they will be living with the results of current plans.
- Utilize national design trends.
- Property rights need to be protected; people who buy land to retire on should have some flexibility in terms of complying to the GMA.
- Concern that Clark County will follow the high-density model developed in Portland.